

ON-SITE NEWS: Health Care, Education, B&I, Transportation, Institutions, Recreation

For school foodservice A- isn't good enough; kids deserve A+

Just how bad is the food served in New York City's public school cafeterias?

That's the answer provided on whom — or, actually, where you believe.

When the New York City Department of Health released the results of its nine-month-long inspection of more than 1,000 city school cafeterias last month, local newspapers arrived at dramatically different interpretations of the results.

The headline of the story reported in The New York Times, on an inside page of the paper's Metro section, read "Health inspectors find most school cafeterias clean and their food safe." A teaser on Page B-1 quoted a Department of Health spokesman's comment that "what we found was comparable to what we saw in restaurants."

Comparative reporting, however, was not unique to local tabloids, the New York Post and the Daily News. "Not Fit To Eat," screamed the front page of the Post. Inside, the story headline read "School cafeterias flunk Health Department tests" even though the article stated, deep in the body of the copy, that the great majority of the schools passed inspection. In the first few days after corrections were made on the stories, further corrections were made on the stories or "penned."

The lead sentence in The Daily News' article was "School cafeterias that dish out meals to thousands of students are infested with vermin and ridged with unsanitary conditions."

So, is the foodservice pretty bad or pretty good? Activity, it's both.

The facts were indigestible. More than 4,500 vis-



ON-SITE INSIGHTS

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lations were found, about one-third of which were deemed "critical," in roughly 10 percent of the schools' cafeterias. Those violations included foods being undercooked and held at improper temperatures, kitchens lacking adequate hand-washing equipment, and food preparation areas containing clutter, debris, and foods being held past expiration dates.

The Times provided the more complete, unimpeachable account of the report, echoing the Department of Health's "good but could be better" verdict. The Post and Daily News sensationalized the reports by dwelling on the more supranging details and filling the copy with the most outspoken comments from parents and teachers.

Readers should not be naive enough to take all of the school-cafeteria articles found in New York's newspapers at face value.

The tabloids use sensational news to sell papers, and reporters tend to exaggerate claims or play up the most inflammatory pieces of information. The Post and Daily News panned the school

district unfairly by overstating the case and leaning too heavily on the worst violations.

On the other hand, it is not as easy to claim that the Times is in both the tone of its article and its placement, downplayed a serious situation in the best interests of its readers.

Give the Board of Education credit. It asked the Department of Health to conduct the in-depth examination. Chancellor Rudy Crew was not requested to call in his agency. Crew's office said that all violations would be corrected by Aug. 1, in time for the new school year.

However, that does not excuse the New York City Board of Education. The board has a serious problem on its hands, one that it became aware of nearly a year ago. It is not enough to say that 90 percent of the schools' school-cafeteria food is acceptably clean. What about that school foodservice is on par with restaurants in those matters?

I don't have to eat in a substandard restaurant. Thousands of school-age children have no choice when it comes to their cafeteria. In fact, for a disturbingly high percentage of youngsters, school food is the only food they eat on many days. School foodservice is in New York, and in cities across the country, is responsible to keep these operations clean.

While the Board of Education and Chancellor Crew can decry the tabloid newspapers' reporting of the story as unfair, they cannot ignore one simple truth: You cannot fan the flames when there is no fire. It's long past time for New York City to put out this fire.

ON-SITE BRIEFS

Aramark 'sells' parents on school food

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — How can school foodservice directors get children to buy into a lunch program?

Aramark's managers in the East Bay region of Rhode Island believe one way is to "sell" the children's parents on the program. So Aramark has begun inviting parents to programs involving school foodservice.

According to Nancy Roberts, assistant director of foodservice for Aramark in the East Bay region, schools in the region's seven districts have experienced with Parent Lunch and Parent-Child days and with inviting parents to food fairs held by the contractor.

The offerings are part of Aramark's Team Nutrition program in the East Bay area.

"Parents work very well for those schools that have tried it," Roberts said. "It gives them the opportunity to see for themselves what school lunches are like these days and the chance to spend a little more time with their children."

Roberts added that Aramark plans to continue the program next school year.

Sportservice promotes Stib to COO

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Sportservice has geared up for the opening of several new accounts this year by creating the position of director of plans and operations.

Tony Stib has been hired to fill the position, according to Edward Green, chief operating officer of Sportservice.

The company, a subsidiary of Delaware North Corp., will be involved in the development of two new accounts: Midland Arenas in Buffalo and Tampa Bay Arena in Florida. Sportservice also will provide catering at the U.S. Open in the National Tennis Center, Flushing, N.Y.

Stib will oversee employee training and corporate support for these new accounts, Green said. In addition, Stib will help implement several strategic-planning initiatives for the company.

Stib had been general manager of foodservice operations for Sportservice at Busch Stadium, St. Louis, since 1991. He joined the company in 1981.

Eurest holds inaugural Dining Academy

CHICAGO — Eurest Dining Services held its first Dining Academy just months into its regional offices here. More than 500 Eurest employees, including district managers, department heads, unit managers and chefs, attended the day-long seminar.

The day was structured like a college curriculum, with students registering for up to four "classes" during the day. Each session lasted 65 minutes, and the day included breakfast, lunch, an afternoon reception and a keynote address by Jim Carrington, president of Eurest.

Classes featured such subjects as accounting, purchasing, client relations and growth, merchandising, branding, customer satisfaction, and innovative recipes and food-preparation techniques.

Smithsonian Institution, Daka Intl. team up to create 19th-century-themed food court

WASHINGTON — The Smithsonian Institution has long been known for its celebration of American history.

Daka Restaurants, in conjunction with the Smithsonian, is launching that celebration to include foodservice venues in a historical setting. Early results, according to Daka's senior vice president of marketing, Rick Hendrie, indicate the collaboration is a success.

Smith Street Cafes debuted last month on the lower level of the Smithsonian Institution's Museum of Natural History. The operation is a food court styled like a 19th-century street scene.

The menu at the four venues — Smithsonian's New York Style Deli, The Pizza Parlor, All American Grill and Eastern Shore.

"The museum people wanted something that was unique to them, so we gave it to them," Hendrie said. "The museum is delighted with the concept, and sales are significantly higher than what we were doing before."

The museum was a collaborator in the effort, which turned up the Smithsonian's foodservice coordinator, Roland Banchier, Ciao Little International: a local architect; and a Daka team, which included Hendrie and regional director of operations, Cindy Green.

Hendries explained that the venues were designed to appeal to the Smithsonian's key demographics, which are schoolchildren and young adults. Daily sales are averaging more than \$10,000, with 30 to 35 percent of business being done at the Deli and 20 to 25 percent being generated at the Pizza Parlor.



Smithsonian's Deli is one of four venues in the new, 19th-century-style food court at the Smithsonian Institution.

Smithsonian's Deli is modeled after the Delancey Street Deli, which Daka has developed for use in other accounts. It features a rotating menu of interesting sandwiches and salads, such as a vegetable sandwich, a roast beef sandwich and Waldorf salad with smoked salmon.

At the Pizza Parlor pizzas, calzones and stromboli are made fresh each day. All American Grill is patterned after Fuddruckers, Daka International's upscale barbecue chain.

Eastern Shore Market offers Maryland crab cakes, roast chicken, prime rib, carved to order and a variety of salad, vegetables and hot side dishes in a boardwalk-type setting.

CONTRACT CORNER

John Metz on branding

"Branding has come a long way since we installed our first Burger King at the University of Illinois at Chicago many years ago. Branding is no longer just a trend; it has become a way of life in the foodservice industry. Now, more than ever, people want to buy products they know. We are primarily a service in the industry, so if that is what our customers want, we have no choice but to satisfy that desire."



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